

PHILONEWS

November 2005

From the chair

I am relieved to report that the integrated planning process, which has taken up so much of our time this Fall, is done at the departmental level. We examined our programs, curricula and research, we thought through our goals for the next five years, and we proposed a wide variety of initiatives.

I am very grateful to faculty, students and staff for their participation, and particularly to members of the integrated planning committee—Andrew Bailey, Peter Eardley, Karyn Freedman and John Russon—for throwing themselves on the grenade that was the Provost’s integrated planning timetable.

In my view, the most important part of the integrated planning process takes place at the departmental level. It is here that the most substantial vision and goals are articulated, the most precise assessment of existing programs occurs, the most definite plans are developed, and the most consequential decisions are made.

Our departmental plan is a significant element within the matrix of factors that will shape how this department evolves over the next few years. - *Andrew Wayne*

Stephen Lewis on the AIDS Pandemic

On October 6, Stephen Lewis addressed a full house at War Memorial Hall on global issues such as the African AIDS pandemic. Not only did this event sell out several days earlier, but about 150 people lined up outside War Memorial Hall before the talk in the hopes of getting in. Many congratulations to the Philosophy Graduate Students Association, led by David Peck, for organizing this outstanding event.

Undergraduate philosophy movie night draws a crowd

On October 27 the Undergraduate Students Philosophy Club screened *The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, a peculiar love story that revolved around the premise that unhappy memories could be “erased” from the minds of willing customers. The movie had a significant Nietzschean subtext, and the famous words from Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil* (sec. 216) were invoked twice during the film. Parodying the Sermon on the Mount, Nietzsche wrote: “Blessed are the forgetful: for they get the better even of their blunders.” For Nietzsche, of course, a lack of memory is no blessing at all. Instead, Nietzsche argues for the opposite; that we remember everything good and bad, and learn to bear the burden of our memories

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until we are finally able to proclaim, as Nietzsche puts it, *amor fati*, love of our fate, and the *willing* that our past be exactly as it was. Then, as a final act of self-affirmation, will that our past be as it was even if it is to recur eternally. About 70 students attended, and a lively discussion ensued. - *Brian Wetstein*

McCullagh wins grant to investigate the varieties of concept-possession

Mark McCullagh has been awarded an SSHRC Standard Research Grant of \$40,040 to argue for, elaborate and investigate the consequences of the view that possessing a concept is not an all-or-nothing matter but depends on what it is that you're *doing* with that concept.

Consider someone's belief that *p*. If there is such a thing as *clearly* believing that *p*, it is more demanding in the following sense: one can believe that *p* without clearly believing that *p*. (Both Descartes and Frege, in different ways, commit themselves to there being such a difference.) On the other hand there are mental states that are *less* demanding than believing that *p*: for example, *receiving testimony* that *p*.

The project is to understand what relations we should use to describe such differences and to understand what it is about the purposes behind our practice of attributing mental states to each other that accounts for such differences. The upshot of this is that despite the fact that there can be no story about concept possession *tout court*, we can understand the different kinds of it in terms of relations that they stand in to each other.

This view has consequences for: the traditional distinction between direct and indirect quotation; the metaphysics of

propositions; the semantics of “that”-clauses; and the view that psychological explanations must be stated in terms of contents that are generally not shared among different subjects' beliefs.

Bailey wins grant to develop a metaphysics of consciousness

Andrew Bailey has been awarded an SSHRC Standard Research Grant of \$57,614 to develop—or at least move forward on developing—the philosophical basis for a theory of phenomenal consciousness. Such a theory must satisfy the following criteria:

- it allows for the study of consciousness by the natural sciences;
- it is robustly realist about the first-person phenomenality of consciousness;
- it allows consciousness to play a causal role;
- it is consistent with naturalistic accounts of mental content.

There is at present, in Bailey's view, no account of consciousness that satisfactorily accommodates all four of these desiderata.

The plan has four major components:

- a defence of robust phenomenal realism and internalism, based partly on a re-examination of arguments from illusion;
- a critique of a priorist defences of immaterialism, which are often associated with such qualia realism;
- discussion of the problem of the reduction/supervenience of phenomenal consciousness to the physical world, including a defence of a reductive account of this relation; and

Philosophy calendar

Contact the Philosophy office at 824-4120, ext. 53272 for more information.

Nov. 25, 3:30 p.m. Joseph Heath (Toronto), “The Benefits of Cooperation” (Mack 228).

Dec. 2, 3:30 p.m. Departmental meeting, room TBA.

- discussion of the problem of naturalizing qualia, particularly with respect to the role of phenomenality in mental content/introspection.

Central Canada Seminar for the Study of Early Modern Philosophy

The seminar, which took place at the Macdonald Stewart Arts Centre on the weekend of October 15th and 16th, attracted a wide range of scholars in early modern philosophy—from well-established scholars to graduate students.

Among the many excellent papers presented, our own colleague, Karen Wendling presented a paper entitled “Inequality in the Lockean Family”. Dr. Wendling examined the Lockean family in the state of nature, and particularly the extent, ground and end of parents', masters' and husbands' powers within the family. In arguing against Filmer, Locke developed an account of natural and private rights in which these rights accrue only on the adequate performance of certain duties. In this acquired sense alone do fathers possess greater rights and power than their dependents. Wendling showed that Lockean citizens are those people who are under no “subordinate relations” and who do not depend on anyone else to reason for them. These people are the fathers or masters of families. - *Patricia Sheridan*